

Kettering University

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OST-2004-17343
Correspondence



March 31, 2004

The Honorable Norman Y. Mineta
Secretary
Department of Transportation
400 Seventh Street, SW, Room 10200
Washington, DC 20590

OST-2004-17343-6

Re: Proposal of Bishop International Airport ("FNT") for
Small Community Air Service Development Program

Dear Secretary Mineta:

As a Flint area university that needs convenient and low-fare air service, we urge you to approve Bishop International Airport's ("FNT") application for a small community development grant.

As you know, businesses need air service options. Working with local businesses, FNT has had important successes in attracting new service. The airport's growth began when AirTran Airways, Inc. ("AirTran") started serving FNT in May of 1997. The initiation of AirTran's low fare service spurred lower airfares from competing airlines and provided a tremendous economic boost to our entire region. As you have noted, when low-fare airlines enter markets, traffic is stimulated and fares drop. After AirTran added Orlando and Fort Lauderdale service from FNT, Northwest Airlines also added Florida service. Our employees and customers enjoy more nonstop Florida service than at any time in the past. This is a positive development.

While we are pleased with these developments, we understand that service in small communities is fragile. This why it is critical that AirTran continue to expand its FNT market.

While we have enjoyed low-fare options to parts of the country, it is essential for our business needs that AirTran establish low-fare air service to business markets including the Washington or New York areas. As you stated in a March 10, 2004 speech, "Transportation has never been more important to America's economic future than it is right now." Although FNT has grown, we have limited choices for direct service to markets that are essential to our continued growth. Low-fare service to Washington or New York would stimulate new traffic, decrease airline ticket prices, provide expanded travel options, and increase local jobs and economic spin-off businesses. It would also encourage the larger carriers to consider additional markets as Northwest did after AirTran's entry into the Florida market.

By adding another market at FNT, AirTran's presence at FNT would be strengthened. As business people, we understand that AirTran must expand if it is going to become a permanent part of FNT air service. As air carriers and all businesses grow, they can spread out their costs and alternatives, giving us both an even stronger market consisting of newly generated traffic. This traffic would be spurred on by the lower fares, stimulating bookings that would never have been made otherwise.

For these reasons, we urge you to approve the FNT application to allow AirTran to add FNT service to the New York or Washington areas.

The continued expansion of our business development depends upon increasing transportation options. We look forward to partnering with you to make this a reality. We stand ready to do our part.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Susan K. Bolt". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "S" and "B".

Susan K. Bolt
Vice President for Administration and Finance

c: Senator Stabenow
Senator Levin
Representative Kildee